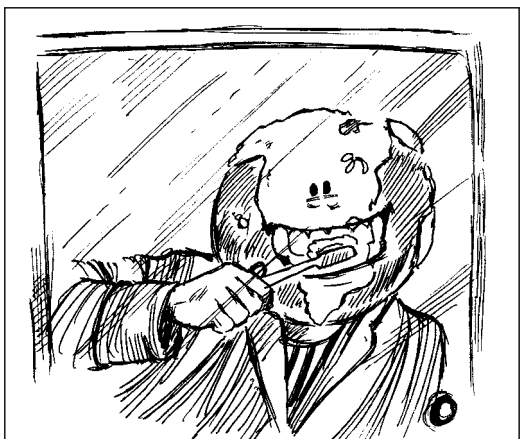


# What's the Big Deal?

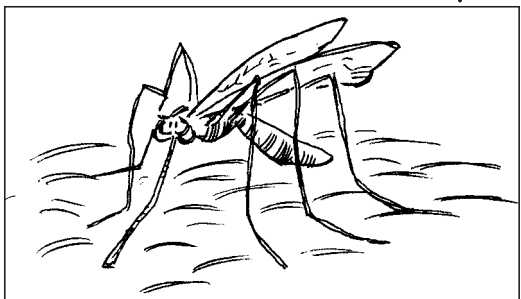


Sometimes little things can turn into big things. Think about brushing your teeth. If you don't brush your teeth for one day, chances are nothing bad will happen. But if you don't brush your teeth for one month, you may develop a cavity.

It's the same thing with global temperatures. If temperatures rise above normal levels for a few days, it's no big deal—the earth will stay more or less the same. But if temperatures continue to rise over a long period of time, then the earth may experience some problems.

Even a small increase in the temperature over a long time can change the climate. When the climate changes, there may be big changes in the things that humans depend on. These things include the level of the oceans and the places where we plant crops. They also include the air we breathe and the water we drink in some areas of the nation.

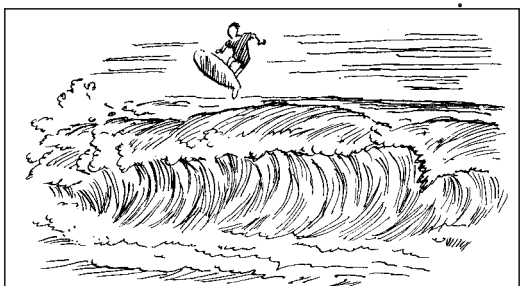
*What Might Happen?* It is important to understand that scientists don't know for sure what global warming will bring. Some of the changes brought about by global warming may be good. But more than 2,000 of the world's leading climate scientists think that many of the changes won't be very good at all.



## Human Health and Disease

If the earth gets hotter, there may be more mosquitoes (muh SKEE toes) in some regions. Mosquitoes can carry diseases to people. One of these diseases is called malaria (muh LAIR ee uh). People who get malaria get a fever, have chills, and become very tired. If the number of places where mosquitoes live increases, more people may get infections (in FEHK shuhns) like malaria.

Higher temperatures may have a slight impact on air quality in cities.



## Sea Level Rise

Global warming may make the sea level become higher. Why? Well, warmer weather makes glaciers melt. A glacier (GLAY shuhr) is a large sheet of ice that moves very, very slowly. Some melting glaciers add more water to the ocean. Warmer temperatures also make water expand. When water expands in the ocean, it takes up more space. Sea level then rises. When that happens, many coastal areas could be flooded. Sea level rise also could reduce the quality of drinking water in coastal areas.

## Crops and Food Supply

Global warming may make the earth warmer in cold places. People who live in these places may have a chance to grow crops in new areas. But global warming also might bring droughts to other places where we grow crops. In some parts of the world, people might not have enough to eat.

